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Confederate Banners.

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Confederate Banners



BY

Mary Lynn Conrad

Harrisonburg, Virginia

This little paper was prepared solely for a monthly meeting of Turner Ashby Chapter, U. D. C., Harrisonburg, Virginia, and with no thought that it would ever venture beyond that little circle. **A** By invitation of the Chairman of the Historical Evening, it was read before the Virginia Division, State Convention, U. D. C., at Richmond, Virginia, and there elicited the request to be put into booklet form. **O**f it I would truly say, "I have gathered me a posy of other men's flowers, and only the thread that binds them together is mine own." :: ::



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CONFEDERATE BANNERS

BY

MARY LYNN CONRAD



The Stone Printing
& Manufacturing Co.
Roanoke, Va., U.S.A.



IN response to a request from Turner Ashby Chapter, U. D. C., I have taken no small pains to cull from such sources as were available to me, these facts relating to those banners chosen by our noble fathers as ensigns to lead our valiant hosts, during the days of the South's great struggle.

In the usual grouping of Confederate Flags, we see four designs. Three of these were National Ensigns and one was the Battle Flag. I shall present them in the order of their adoption, with such a sketch of each as I believe to be authentic history.

During the first year of the war many troops marched out under the flags of their respective states, just as our own Virginia troops bore the flag of the Old Dominion, which was presented to them by Governor Letcher, at Centerville, in the fall of 1861.

But the first flag of the "Confederacy" was known as "The Stars and Bars."

This flag, correctly made, consists of a red field with a white bar one-third the width of the flag, extending through the center, and

having a red space above and below, the same width as the white. The Union blue was to extend through the white space and stop at the red space. In the center of the blue was a circle of seven stars, uniform in size. A new star was authorized for the addition of each new state to the Confederacy.

The Stars and Bars was raised on the staff above the capitol at Montgomery, Alabama, March 4, 1861, simultaneously with the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, by Miss J. C. Tyler, granddaughter of ex-President Tyler. The United Daughters of the Confederacy have adopted the Stars and Bars as their emblem; it is found upon their badge and other insignia.

Here is a story told of its design:

In the Art Studio of Nicola Marschall, a Prussian portrait painter, the designs of the uniform of gray, and the Stars and Bars, are said to have had their conception.

Years before, Marschall had been impressed by the appearance of some Austrian sharp shooters, marching through the streets of Verona, dressed in a striking uniform of gray. Recollections of this uniform suggested the "Confederate gray." Just before the war, he had returned to America, located at Marion, and

resumed the profession of portrait painter and designer. Many wealthy women of the South became his patrons, and among them, Mrs. Napoleon Lockett, a beautiful woman of an old Virginia family, and a loyal daughter of the Southland.

After the secession of the states, she told Mr. Marschall that the Confederate government wanted a flag, and requested him to make a design not too unlike the United States flag, yet differing enough to be readily distinguished at a distance.

Mr. Marschall drew three designs, adhering in all to the stars, the stripes, and the colors. He claims that his first design was the one chosen by the Confederate Congress.

Mr. Marschall enlisted as a private in the Southern Army, going with the command to garrison the fort at the mouth of Mobile Bay, and, later on, serving with the second Alabama regiment of engineers. He served with Colonel Lockett, son of Mrs. Lockett, just previous to the fall of Vicksburg, and continued in the Confederate Army until the curtain fell at Appomattox.

Mr. Marschall, however, is not the sole aspirant for the honor of creating the model for the

"Stars and Bars." In the *Confederate Veteran* of November, 1905, we find the claims of Mr. Orren Randolph Smith set forth by his daughter. She recites the incident of Mr. Smith's taking his design and materials to a friend, now Mrs. N. B. Winborne, of Pine Top, N. C., and requesting her to make a model illustrating his idea. According to Miss Smith, this model was forwarded to the committee on flags, at Montgomery, and was adopted by the Confederate Congress.

Mr. Smith had twice fought under the "Stars and Stripes." He was in Mexico with General Taylor and in Utah with General Harney. He said that a flag for which men would die must be more than a piece of bunting. It must mean something. His model, he claimed, embodied the idea of the Trinity, the three bars representing the Church, the State, and the Press. The blue of the Union was emblematic of the heavens over all, and the circle of stars of equal size represented the equal rights of the respective states.

"But neither Mr. Marschall, Mr. Smith, nor Mrs. Winborne can produce any documentary evidence—letters or newspapers, of that long past war time, to sustain their claims. They are

from memory only, and that is often unreliable. History is necessarily cold-blooded, regarding neither the desire of friends nor the detractions of opponents"—and with claims still conflicting, she is yet unable to award the honor of this beautiful banner to an undisputed author.

While the "Stars and Bars" was recognized as the National Ensign of the Confederacy from March 4, 1861, until May 1, 1863, there is no official record of its adoption by formal act. Of the one hundred and thirty designs said to have been sent to Montgomery, the "Stars and Bars" was the one recommended by the committee on flags and seals, and the recommendation was spread upon the minutes of the Confederate Congress, but the records show no further action taken.

My main facts concerning the origin of the battle flag, the second flag of the Confederacy, are derived from a letter from General W. L. Cabell to the *Veteran*, and a speech by General Beauregard before a meeting of the Louisiana Division of the Army of Northern Virginia, December 6, 1878, and afterwards written up by the trustworthy pen of Mr. Carlton McCarthy. He says: "This banner, the witness and aspiration of many victories which was proudly

borne on every field from Manassas to Appomattox, was born on the field of battle. It was the banner of the Confederate Soldier. The men who followed it, and the world which watched its proud advance or defiant stand, see in it still the unstained banner of a brave and generous people, whose deeds have out-lived their country, and whose final defeat but adds luster to their grandest victories."

At the battle of Manassas, July 21, 1861, when the fate of the Confederacy was trembling in the balance, General Beauregard saw a body of troops moving toward his left, and the Federal right. He could not determine whether they were Federals or Confederates, on account of the similarity of colors and of uniforms, and made more confusing by clouds of dust. General Beauregard's uncertainty and anxiety increased to anguish, as the column pressed on.

The day was hot and sultry, with but an occasional breeze. The colors of the advancing column hung limp about the staff. General Beauregard, still relying on promised help, held the ground, believing that if only re-enforcements should come in time, he might secure the victory.

At this painfully anxious moment, a sudden

puff of wind spread the colors to the breeze and revealed the Stars and Bars. It was General Early with the 24th Virginia, the 7th Louisiana, and the 13th Mississippi. The moment the flag was recognized, General Beauregard exhorted his staff to see that the day was won.

This incident made General Beauregard "determine that the Confederate Soldier must have a banner so distinct that no doubt should ever endanger his cause again on the battle field." He presented the matter to General Joseph Johnston and other officers. Designs were discussed and several submitted which seemed to closely coincide. At Fairfax Court-House, they were submitted to the officers and the now famous battle flag was chosen. This was in September, 1861:

A circular letter was sent to the quartermaster of every regiment and brigade in the army to make flags by this model. There were three sizes: One for the cavalry, one for the artillery, and one for the infantry, the latter being largest.

The first of these flags were distributed by order of General Beauregard, and with "the hope that they might become the emblems of honor and victory."

An address was issued to the ladies of the

South to send their red and blue silk dresses to Captain Selph, quarter-master at Richmond, Va., who was assisted in the flag making by some loyal Southern ladies. The names are given of the Misses Carey of Baltimore, Mrs. Henningsen of Savannah, and Mrs. Hopkins, wife of Judge Hopkins, of Alabama.

The Misses Carey made battle flags for Generals Beauregard, Johnston, and Van Dorn out of their own silk dresses. General Beauregard's flag is now in Memorial Hall, New Orleans, with a statement by him of that fact.

While not strictly relevant to the subject in hand, a digression relating to the charming women conspicuously concerned in the above transaction may be pardonable and entertaining.

"A Southern Girl of 1861" tells us that the Misses Carey were the greatest belles among the many lovely women of Richmond, and were known as the "Carey Invincibles." They had experienced many thrilling adventures coming across the lines. Miss Constance Carey married Mr. Burton Harrison, Private Secretary to President Davis, and has since attained wide-spread note for her clever writing of fiction. Miss Hetty Carey had just been released from Fort McHenry where she had been imprisoned for

wearing a white apron with red ribbon—the Confederate colors. On one occasion when the Federal troops were passing through Baltimore, she stood at an open window waving a Confederate flag. One of the officers noticed it, and called to the Colonel of the regiment to know if he should have her arrested. The Colonel, catching a sight of her defiant loveliness, said emphatically: "No, she is lovely enough to do as she pleases." She afterwards became the wife of General John Pegram, who was killed in battle three weeks from their wedding day.

The original design of the Battle Flag, also called the Beauregard Flag, is shown in the archives of the Southern Historical Society, New Orleans. It was drawn by E. C. Hancock of New Orleans, and presented to Colonel Walton of the Louisiana Artillery.

The Battle Flag was strictly a square flag. The St. Andrews' cross in blue, with thirteen stars, crossed a field of red diagonally. This is the Veterans' flag, having been carried by them in every battle after Manassas, and has now become their emblem. "Though sometimes defeated, it was never dishonored."

After the adoption of the Battle Flag, other banners began to disappear, and, at the end

scarcely any other design was seen. It was the only flag known to the body of Confederate soldiers, though it was not officially adopted by Congress until it became incorporated in the second National Flag and adopted by formal Act, May 1, 1863.

When the Confederate Congress assembled in May, 1863, by formal Act it adopted as a National Emblem the third flag. It was pure white with the Battle Flag as its union. This flag was mostly used by the navy, and few of the soldiers in the field knew it. It was floated from Military Posts, Garrisons, and on the sea.

It was sometimes called the "Jackson Flag." The first one made by the model was sent to President Davis to be unfurled over the Capitol, but it served a holier, tenderer purpose—that of enfolding the body of that Darling of the Confederacy, Stonewall Jackson, whose death had just occurred. With dismay, the superstitious observed this use of the newly-selected flag, and considered it ominous. It was also called the "Stainless Banner."

"This was the only Confederate Flag that sailed every ocean and circumnavigated the globe. It was carried at the peak of the Shenandoah in the most masterly cruise that the world

has ever known and was hauled down in Liverpool, six months after the war was over."

The whaling fleet of the United States was now the largest part of its commerce remaining, and the *Shenandoah* was purchased and especially fitted up to make war on the whaling vessels. Once among the whalers, she took prizes so rapidly that it was necessary to release and bond some in order to get rid of the numerous prisoners, and she made a record that became world-renowned.

Operating in the Arctic waters, so remote from the scenes of battle, it was no wonder that Captain Waddell failed to haul down his colors immediately upon General Lee's surrender, but kept them flying six months after hope was dead. The malicious charge of his continuing belligerent operations, after having knowledge of the surrender, has been properly refuted.

Reasons sufficient were presented to create a fourth flag. There were errors of proportion in the third flag, the length being double its width, which is against all rule, and will not float readily. Both Navy and Army had ascertained that from excessive whiteness, it was too easily soiled. Naval officers, by whom it was mostly used, urged that it was liable to be mistaken for a flag

of truce, especially when hanging limp with the union obscured by its folds.

The fourth and last flag of the Confederacy was adopted March 4, 1865. It was designed by Arthur L. Rogers, Major of Confederate States Artillery. His design was submitted to the committee on Naval affairs, committee on Military affairs, Superintendent of Virginia Military Institute, and many distinguished officers of the Army, all of whom approved it. A bill, drawn by Major Rogers and introduced into the Senate by Mr. Semmes of Louisiana, contains this description of the flag: "The width two-thirds the length, with the union (now used as Battle Flag) three-fifths the width of the flag, so proportioned as to leave the length of the field on the side of the union twice the width of the field below it. To have the ground of the union red and a broad saltier thereon, bordered with white and emblazoned with mullets or five-pointed stars, corresponding in number to the Confederate States. The field to be white, except the outer half from the union to be a red bar extending the width of the flag." Its adoption occurred such a short while before the surrender that it was never in use in the Army, but many were captured (?) on the evacuation

of Richmond, ready to be sent to the army. It is sometimes incorrectly made with a narrow red bar, which should be as wide as the white space.

It is a matter of regret that in the manufacture of these flags, there is such diversity of proportions, as well as other errors. I have given in detail, description of designs, that as Daughters of the Confederacy, we, at least, may recognize those that are true to the model or otherwise.

Of Major Roger's design for the last flag of the Confederacy, he says: "It gave correctness of proportion, distinction and character, relieved the pale appearance and gave a martial look, and really made a beautiful banner that could be mistaken for no other. The heraldic significance of the colors, chiefly white and red, were deemed especially appropriate for the Confederate States, the white being emblematic of purity and innocence, the red of courage and fortitude. The saltier, or broad band, was emblematic of strength.

In the adoption of ensigns by various nations of the world, it is noticed that they generally imitate the ensign of the nation from which they sprung. This is so complied with in the Confederate flag, for our people are chiefly descended from the British and French. We get the

union and St. Andrew's cross from the former, while the red bar comes from the tri-color of the latter." The idea of having the stars to represent the sovereignty of the states is taken from the old "Union," mainly founded by our forefathers.

Major Rogers, the author of the last flag of the Confederacy, was a brave soldier who performed the most important services throughout the war. He raised a company of artillery from Loudoun County, Virginia, which was honorably mentioned for efficient service by General Beauregard in his report of the first Battle of Manassas.

Associated in our minds with the group of Confederate flags is another banner, which we all know through that Marseillaise of the South, "The Bonny Blue Flag." Just how it came to be recognized as a Confederate emblem is a matter not satisfactorily settled, but a little incident relating to it may be of interest to us Virginians. It is given in the minutes of the U. D. C. Convention, 1901, as told by Captain P. C. Carlton.

"In October, 1861, when Richmond was full of troops hurrying to the front, this song was first sung at a theater. Harry McCarthy appeared on the stage accompanied by a young

lady who bore a flag of blue silk with a white star in the center. He commenced singing 'The Bonny Blue Flag,' and before the first verse was ended, the vast audience was wild with excitement. Then the soldier boys rose, yelling themselves hoarse and joined in the chorus, singing it over and over again.

When he sang, 'The Single Star of the Bonny Blue Flag has grown to be eleven,' she shook out the folds, and the flag opened, disclosing the single star surrounded by ten sisters."

Several states lay claim to the flag that bears a single star. Texas and North Carolina each has a single star. The latter has it combined with other characters, but no state can claim the blue flag with the single star.

Harry McCarthy, the gallant little Irish comedian, no doubt evolved it from the enthusiasm of the time. South Carolina may have given him the idea that he wove into a song, which, next to the immortal "Dixie," is likely to survive longest the period that inspired it.

In compiling this paper, I duly acknowledge information gained from minutes of the United Daughters of Confederacy Conventions, The Confederate Museum, Richmond, Va., *The Confederate Veteran*, *The Magazine of the Southern*

Historical Society, Dabney's Life and Campaigns of General T. J. Jackson, and other authentic publications, as well as to distinguished individual Confederates. But to no one, personally, am I so much indebted for information courteously furnished and data confirmed, as to Dr. Samuel E. Lewis, Commander Charles Broadway Rouss Camp, U. C. V., Washington, D. C. As Chairman of the Flag Committee, U. C. V., he has, perhaps, more accurate and complete data on this subject than any other one person, and is regarded as eminent authority.

This task has been a labor of love to me, yet I feel that I have all too imperfectly given you the history of that group of banners—made by the fair hands and baptized by the tears of our mothers, drenched in the gore of our fathers, and brothers, whose very warp and woof are radiant with deeds of valor, and whose only stain is the blood of our heroes. Yes, the Confederate Flag

“Is wreathed around with glory
And will live in song and story,
Though its folds are in the dust.
For its fame on brightest pages,
Penned by poets and by sages,
Shall go sounding down the ages,
Furl its folds tho' now we must.”

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